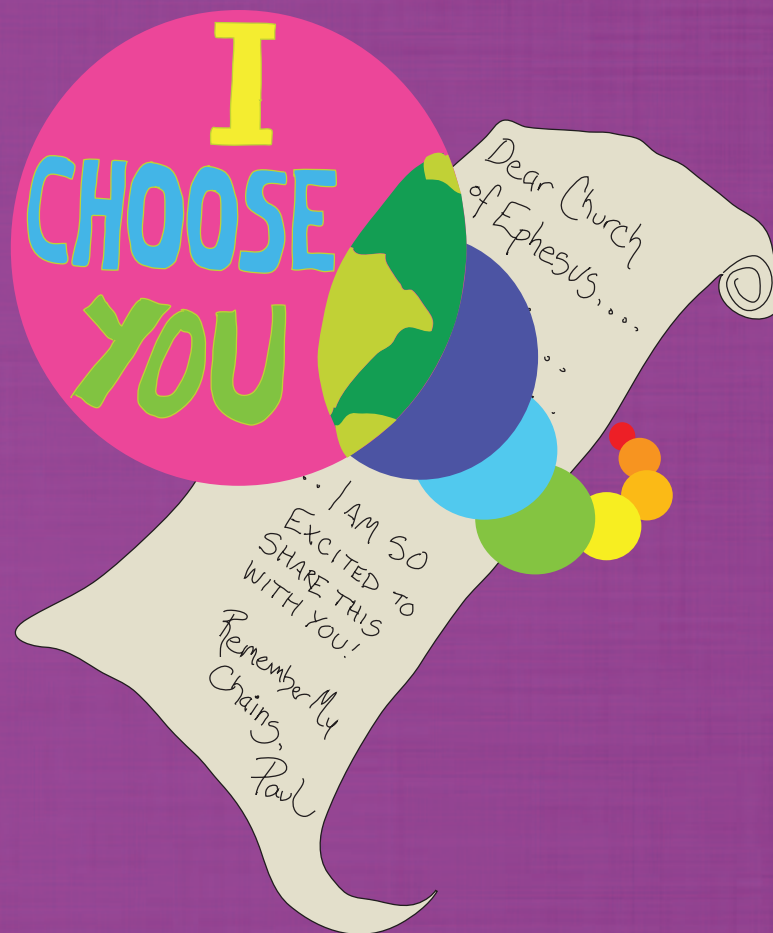


LESSON 63

Chosen before the World Began

EPHESIANS 1:1-23



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD'S SALVATION WAS PLANNED BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Ephesians 1:1–23 from the Scriptures or read story 141, “Chosen before the World Began,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Chosen Ahead of Time

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ three identical decks of cards
- ✓ jacket with breast pocket

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

We Are Not Like God

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ jar filled with small candies of different colors
- ✓ small paper cups
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 63—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

LESSON SNAPSHOT

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN
9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Chosen in Christ

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ white envelopes with the word “Christ” printed in large letters on the front—one for each student
- ✓ three-by-five cards—one for each student
- ✓ rubber stamp to represent the Holy Spirit —the letter “H” or a dove
- ✓ ink pad
- ✓ a cup of brewed coffee

TOTAL 85 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Our salvation in Christ was always God’s plan—Following Paul’s greeting, the first substantial paragraph in Ephesians (Ephesians 1:3–10) is actually one continuous praise celebrating the accomplishment of God’s redemption through Christ. We learn some mind-bending truths in Paul’s praise of God. We learn that God knew us before we were born. We learn that he chose us in Christ before we were born (Ephesians 1:4). God chose us to be adopted through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5). This plan of redemption was all according to God’s pleasure and will. God was not surprised by the fall of Adam and Eve; he knew they would sin. God always planned for mankind’s redemption through Jesus.

The idea that God chose us to be adopted before the world was created is hard for us to understand. How does that work with our responsibility to repent and believe (Ephesians 1:13)? Rather than try to pit God’s sovereignty against man’s responsibility we should resolve that they are both true. To be saved, all men must choose to believe in God’s saving plan. And yet, in the mystery of God, before we were born or able to do any choosing, God chose us. God did not choose us based on our works or on his anticipation that we would choose him. God chose us according to his love (Ephesians 1:4–5). That is, God firmly decided, according to his delight in us as his children, that he would save us sinners by the work of Christ!

Christ’s sacrifice was always God’s plan—God didn’t scramble to come up with a plan after Adam and Eve sinned. He wasn’t wondering what he would do next. God never said, “Oh, no! Adam and Eve disobeyed. Now what am I going to do?” Even before the fall of Adam and Eve, God’s plan to restore fallen mankind was to sacrifice his Son (Ephesians 1:9). Each of God’s children was chosen in Christ as part of God’s plan (Ephesians 1:4). God chose the exact time for Jesus’ birth and arranged for it to be foretold by the prophets and even symbolized through the sacrificial system he instituted in ancient Israel.

God’s plan of salvation evokes thanksgiving and prayer—Paul’s opening declaration of the saving grace of God in Christ is one big praise! Every time we hear that someone has believed in Jesus Christ, we should rejoice in the same way Paul rejoiced over the salvation of the Ephesians. Paul’s prayer (Ephesians 1:16–23) also helps us know what we can pray for in our own lives. We should ask God to help us know him better through the Spirit, that our hearts might be enlightened to see our great inheritance and that we might know the great power made available to all believers (Ephesians 1:19).

Where Is the Gospel?

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

We, who were chosen in Christ before the world began (Ephesians 1:4), were included in Christ when we heard the gospel and believed (Ephesians 1:13). Though we are chosen, we are yet sinners until the appointed time where we hear and believe. The gospel is the message of salvation; but more, it is the power of our salvation. We hear it and believe. At the moment of salvation, God places his Spirit in us as a deposit and a guarantee of our full redemption, which will be experienced when sin will be removed and our sinful bodies will be changed into glorified bodies.

In Ephesians 1:7 we read, “In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.” This is the heart of the gospel. Christ’s shed blood on the cross is the foundation of the forgiveness of sins for all those who “heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him” (Ephesians 1:13).

Paul’s introduction to Ephesians is a repetition of the basic facts of the good news. To this he adds that God’s plan for us individually was known in the mind of God even before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW **5 MIN**

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY **10 MIN**

Read Ephesians 1:1–23 from the Scriptures or read story 141, “Chosen before the World Began,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 **10 MIN**

Chosen Ahead of Time

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ three identical decks of cards
- ✓ jacket with breast pocket

Use this exercise to help the children understand the concept that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Prior to class, take two of the card decks and separate the black cards from the red, placing all the black cards into one pile and all the red cards into another pile. Place the red deck in your pants pocket (wear a pair of pants with pockets large enough to easily accommodate a deck of cards without being obvious to those around you). Open the third deck of cards and place it in your breast pocket.

During class, take the black deck and ask two volunteers to come forward and take any card, look at it, and then place it in their pockets. Walk across the room and drop a card on the floor and ask the two volunteers to come over and stand on it. While you are walking back, switch decks putting the black deck in an empty pants pocket and pulling the red deck out from the other pocket. Have two more volunteers each pick a red card, look at it, and then place it in their pockets. Walk across the room and drop a card on the floor and ask those two volunteers to come and stand on it.

Repeat the exercise again without switching decks and have a third pair of volunteers pick red cards and stand on a red card next to the first group. (You will be “guessing” the color of their cards, but you don’t need to remember because they are standing on a card that has the same color as the one they picked.)

Do this one more time, again switching decks back to the black deck as you casually move across the room. Ask for two final volunteers, have them pick cards from the black deck and stand on a black card.

In the end you should have four pairs of volunteers standing on cards that match the color of the ones they picked.

To finish the trick, walk over to a pair of students, pick up the card off the floor and say, “before this class even began I predetermined that the cards you picked would be....Show the card on

the floor and call out its color. Then ask the students to reveal the color of their cards. They will be amazed that you can guess the color of their cards.

Do this all four times. The children will start to guess how you did it. Tell them that you might consider telling them after you go over the Scripture for today.

Read through Ephesians 1:1–6 and talk about God choosing us before Adam and Eve sinned, even before the creation of the world. (While you are doing this, inconspicuously take the normal deck of cards out and hold them in your hand as you teach.) Tell the class that God had a plan to save us and knew all Christians by name just like you had a plan and knew just what color card each person would pick. (Display the normal cards as you speak).

Tell the class we believe that God chose us before the foundation of the world but we don't exactly understand how God is able to know us before we are born. We believe it because that is what Scripture teaches. Tell them this is similar to your trick. They know you chose the cards the students would pick before the class began but they do not know how.

Invite the children to try to explain how you did the trick. If they ask to see the cards, give them the normal deck. In the end tell them some things are just meant to be a mystery. (Don't tell them how you did the trick, as that would ruin it for teachers who may want to use it in the future.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESON 2 15 MIN

We Are Not Like God

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ jar filled with small candies of different colors
- ✓ small paper cups
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers

Explain to the children that you are going to see how many of them can predetermine future events.

Ask for a volunteer and show them the candy in the clear jar and a paper cup. Tell them that in a moment you are going to have them take a paper cup and scoop out a cup full of candy. Then you are going to spread the candy out on the table to see how many candies of each color they scooped.

Prior to scooping, tell your volunteer that they first must tell you which color will they scoop the most of. Get their answer and write it on the whiteboard for everyone to see. Then ask them how many of each color they are going to scoop. (Write this on the board as well.)

Explain that if they get the color correct, they get to keep that color of the candy they scooped. If they get the number of candies correct of the color they scooped the most, they get to keep the whole cup full. And if they get all their numbers correct, they get to take the entire jar of candy as a prize.

Do this several times. It will be difficult enough for them to guess the correct color. Few if any will guess any of the numbers correct. Use this as a contrast to help the children see just how amazing God is to be able to plan his whole salvation and know everyone he would adopt into his family before the world began!

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 63—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- **Who are the people drawn in among the stars?**
(They are all God’s adopted children.)

■ **Why do you think they are drawn among the stars?**

(God created people and God created the stars. Genesis 22:17 tells us that Abraham's children would be just like the stars, too many to count.)

■ **What does it tell us about God that he knew each of us even before we were born?**

(God is all-knowing and all-powerful.)

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Chosen in Christ

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ white envelopes with the word "Christ" printed in large letters on the front—one for each student
- ✓ three-by-five cards—one for each student
- ✓ rubber stamp to represent the Holy Spirit—the letter "H" or a dove
- ✓ ink pad
- ✓ a cup of brewed coffee

Prior to class, write the names of all of your students in indelible ink on three-by-five cards. Take the coffee and pour it over the cards in a basin so that they all become stained. Allow them to dry.

Print the word "Christ" on the outside of the envelopes and purchase a rubber stamp to represent the Holy Spirit.

In class, pass out the cards. Explain to the children that the Bible passage today from Ephesians 1 tells us that all those who believe in Jesus were chosen in Christ (verse 4) and sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (verse 13). Paul also explains that "in him" we have redemption through his blood (verse 7), "in him" we have an inheritance (verse 11), and "in Christ" we have every spiritual blessing (verse 3).

The children will probably start to complain about the stained cards. Tell them that the stain represents their sin, and that they could never get to heaven with the stain of sin because God is holy.

Then explain the gospel, including many of the blessings we have if we put our faith in Christ. Then pass out an envelope to each child. Tell them the envelope represents Christ and they can put their card in it and seal the envelope shut. Once they are in Christ, their sins are covered.

Then, one by one use the stamp and pad to stamp over the flap of the envelope. Explain to the children that once you stop trusting yourself and start believing and trusting in Christ, God seals you with his Holy Spirit.

Take the card of an absentee and hold it up next to an envelope and explain: If we tried to go to heaven with the stain of our sin, God would have to judge our sin. We would be cast into hell. But if we trust in Jesus and what he did on the cross and are hidden in Christ (put the card in the envelope) then the Bible tells us that the blood of Jesus covers our sins!

Pray and thank the Lord for all he has done and for the children.

LESSON 63 - CHOSEN BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN

